

5 September 2019

Climate Change Standing Overview Group – Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee

Climate Emergency Response Group Meeting

Present

Councillors Alistair Dewhirst (Chair), Atkinson, Ball, Berry, Bloxham, Colthorpe, Hodgson, J Hook, Hosking, Slade, Shaw and Whitton

Phil Norrey, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service DCC
Doug Eltham, Environment and Sustainability Policy Officer DCC

Members received a presentation from officers on the following:

Background

DCC Has responded to concern about climate change and has convened the Climate Emergency Response Group (CERG) at a strategic level.
The aim of the CERG is to coordinate a plan for Devon to combat Climate Change and its effects aided by Exeter University and the Met office. This doesn't preclude individual organisations implementing their own environmental policies.
This is an attempt to galvanise Devon as place so people can be clear as to what they can do as individuals and as a group.
DCC is producing its own carbon reduction plan within 6 months.
CERG have adopted an emergency planning framework that local resilience forum uses in bringing groups together.
CERG are working with Paul Netherton of Devon and Cornwall Police, who is the national police lead for resilience.
The challenge will be to aim for high but achievable goal and to act upon them.

Public Support

Inevitably, any actions on climate change will not please everyone. Processes will have to be developed, so legitimacy of what is being done can be defended.
Devon can and will include Torbay and Plymouth and communication on these issues will be kept across the borders with Somerset and Cornwall.

Town and Parish Councils

The SOG can act in the role of Scrutiny and look at the Police and NHS as well as other local authorities.
CERG is committed to working with Town and Parish Councils.
CERG is working with the Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) who recently funded a workshop for town and parish councils to develop their own climate change plans.

Citizens Assembly

The planned Citizens Assembly would not have a legally binding role.
Indeed, it will be a challenge to be balanced, other voices don't agree with Climate Emergency. The first Citizens assembly meeting will take place in February. Doug Eltham is leading on procuring the agency to organise the Citizen's assembly.

Net Zero Steering Group

A Net Zero steering group will work with the tactical group. This will include Select committee style meetings, for example agricultural groups and supermarkets will be invited to discuss how to decarbonise food system and the timescales involved in this.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity previously has certainly been identified as an important issue by the CERG. CERG is keen to identify how it can be incorporated into the broader agenda without going beyond the remit of climate change. Biodiversity can be considered a risk and therefore be included in community risk registers, for example.

There are overlaps with Climate Change and biodiversity though, for example in the planting of trees.

Clean Energy Production

West of England Energy infrastructure cannot benefit from large inputs of new green energy, due to the complications of National Grid and its capacity. The Government is promising changes in this area though.

CIRS SOG role

DCC has 6 months to come up with an energy and carbon strategy and set a target for its own decarbonisation. CIRS can aide with the scrutiny and overview of this.

DCC's carbon plan is going to October Cabinet. Involvement with this would be a constructive next step for the SOG.

Issues Identified by Members

During discussion with members the following issues were raised:

- The need for the involvement of Town and parish Councils.
- The financial cost of environmental policies.
- The role of a Citizens' Assembly in future plans.
- The need to work with neighbouring councils to DCC.
- The need to support biodiversity in plans surrounding Climate Change.
- The importance of maintaining the timescales in place.
- The complexities involved in calculating carbon emissions when factors such as carbon "imports" are included.

Actions

- A brief report of the session to be included on 26 October 2019 CIRS Scrutiny Committee.
- Continued communication and collaboration with the Climate Emergency Response Group.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 4 October 2019 with the theme of the DCC Carbon Strategy Report.

COUNCILLOR DEWHIRST
CHAIR